

ARCHIVE COPY

98-E-52
C. 1

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A STRATEGIC ASSESSEMENT

CORE COURSE 5604

Col Khalid Migren Al-Saud, RSAF

LTC Darrell Sims, USAF

LTC Jack Dees, USA

Seminar G

| Report Documentation Page | | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. | | | | | |
| 1. REPORT DATE 1998 | | 2. REPORT TYPE | | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-1998 to 00-00-1998 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Sub-Saharan Africa. A Strategic Assessment | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000 | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT see report | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 12 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | | |

Rich in mineral resources and possessing tremendous market potential, Africa nonetheless holds no U S vital interest. The U S has no significant military presence in Africa to include no bases, no combat forces, and no homeport for U S military ships.¹ Despite these limited security interests, the Clinton Administration has been committed to ensuring a robust United States (U S) role on the continent, focused on democratic reform and access to the free markets. The authors agree that such an activist role is prudent, although we take exception to certain of the Administration's policy prescriptions.

Our strategic assessment of the sub-Sahara African region follows. It is our intent to present this effort by first discussing the African context and our assumptions. We will continue our analysis by examining the American national interest, transnational interests, and opportunities for U S policy in the region. We will conclude with recommendations for the broad outlines of future U S policy toward Africa.

Context and Assumptions

Africa has a population of over 800 million, 20 percent of the world's land area and a wealth of natural resources and biological diversity that cannot be ignored. There are overarching trends associated with these sub-Saharan countries that can be divided in five areas: political, economic, social/cultural, military, and environment.

Political. Instability in the region results from parasitic elite minorities that seized power in many countries after independence. These kleptocracies hindered political and economic maturity of these countries as well as suffocating the people with an autocratic rule. Political problems linger. Although much of the continent is involved in varying degrees of democratic reforms, single-party political systems remain the norm. Many states have traded hopes for long-term stability – which would involve political reform – for a short-term stability that favors ruling elites. In some states political

authorities have achieved limited success in providing basic needs, but in others inefficient bureaucracies have developed in efforts to deal with insurmountable problems. Elsewhere, the "failed state syndrome" has occurred throughout Africa, when governments fall short in resolving ethnic conflicts and economic hardships.

Another key aspect of Africa's political importance to the United States is its large representation at the United Nations. The 49 sub-Saharan African countries comprise a major block of votes in the General Assembly. Key votes in the General Assembly will require important lobbying of African delegations by the American representatives.

Economic. Sub-Saharan African countries are relatively poor and most nations are at the bottom of the global economic ladder. Economic problems exacerbate ethnic or other conflicts, which leads to further economic decline. For example, most nations fail to increase food production at the same rate as the population increases. Water scarcity in the region is a major barrier to food production, and therefore economic development. Food security in Africa is also threatened by El Nino's effect on the weather.

The region's abundant natural resources have not produced national economic wealth. Thus, untapped resources remain untapped and have led to single-commodity economies that participate in very little intra-regional trade. Per capita income and saving rates are among the world's lowest and declining. Poor health care contributes to a very low life expectancy rate. Most nations rely on foreign aid and have become debt burdened.

The economic future for sub-Saharan Africa is not optimistic. It appears that foreign investors limit investment out of fear of political instability. Trade barriers also impede investment and slow economic development. One area, however, that shows progress and promise is southern Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa will remain the poorest continent in the next two decades. The decline in foreign aid from Western nations is likely to continue. Furthermore, we expect foreign investment to remain limited due to ethnic conflict and political instability. However some growth, although slow, will occur as the effects of globalization are felt in Africa.

Social/Cultural. The complexity and diversity of sub-Saharan Africa has caused many problems. Many of Africa's borders result from its colonial heritage and often they do not reflect cultural, religious and historical connections. The colonial boundaries ignored the cultural cohesion of tribal Africa and separated people of ethnic groups linked for centuries by their common heritage and language.²

Military. The armed forces in the region are a major source of political instability. They are poorly trained, for the most part, and lack modern equipment. More importantly, they have no tradition of neutrality in politics and have not been focused on the external defense of the country. In some places, such as Zaire under Mobutu and today in Nigeria, they have taken on a principal role of upholding internal security and propping up corrupt regimes. In other states, Liberia and Sierra Leone being prime examples, military intervention has had devastating consequences for political stability.

Environmental. Sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing severe environmental challenges. Poor soil and water management programs have led to increasing desertification in the northern and southern parts of the region. Africa also suffers from deforestation. About 90% of the population use firewood for cooking and there are no comprehensive programs to restore trees.³ Droughts also plague the region, often causing subsistence economies to flounder. Environmental degradations will continue in the future as states ignore long-term damage to the environment in favor of short-term economic gains.

National Interests

U S long-term interests in sub-Sahara Africa are to maintain stability, encourage democratic growth, promote economic reforms and provide humanitarian assistance

Maintain Stability. The U S must be committed to maintaining stability in the Africa, as the prerequisite for progress in all other areas of concern To this end, the U S has encouraged diplomatic resolution to African conflicts and has supported multilateral initiatives of the Organization of African Unity and other sub-regional organizations ⁴ Additionally, it is in the U S interest to reduce arms flows that can jeopardize economic and political stability and to work to quell the interventionist impulse of African militaries

Encourage Democratic Growth and Respect for Human Rights. It is in the U S long-term interest to encourage the diverse and varied governments of Africa to adopt an array of liberal democratic reforms Promoting representative governance by empowering a growing middle class and strengthening military, political, civic, and judicial institutions will enhance democracy while encouraging “good governance ”

Sustained Economic Development and Trade. One of the core interests of U S National Security Strategy is to promote America’s prosperity, and we have historically selectively engaged nation-states offering economic growth ⁵ In 1996, U S trade with sub-Sahara Africa grew 18%, exports to Africa grew 14%, outstripping exports to the former Soviet Union by 20%, and U S imports amounted to over 18% The U S largest trading partner is the Southern Africa Development Community, which includes Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe and South Africa ⁶ Sub-Sahara Africa, principally Nigeria and Angola, has provided a steady supply of crude oil to the U S , accounting for 70% of African exports ⁷

Humanitarian Assistance. U S moral principles and leadership compel the U S to intercede in complex emergencies to alleviate suffering Humanitarian interventions are necessary to offer disaster relief, contain escalating costs and stem further intrastate and regional instability

Transnational Threats to U.S. Interests

Sub-Sahara Africa instability and transnational problems include drug trafficking, terrorism, radical regimes, environmental and health concerns; these problems threaten U S interests

Drug Trafficking.

Illicit drug trade threatens the stability of the international order and U S public health interest

Terrorism and Radical Regimes.

Radical regimes threaten the West, especially state sponsors of terrorism Sudan is the one African country that has been identified as a state sponsor of terrorism

Environmental and Health.

Environmental deterioration from deforestation, drought, and pollution contribute to instability, violence, and nation-state collapse Disease is a major concern on the continent, over one-half of the world's HIV infected persons live in Africa ⁸ Further, the possible transport of unknown and deadly microorganisms from tropical Africa is a legitimate U S security concern

Opportunities for U.S. Policy in Africa

The end of the Cold War has dramatically changed the strategic landscape on the continent From the end of colonialism to the collapse of communism, U S policy toward Africa was been seen through the lens of the global competition with the Soviet Union Africa was a battleground in the "long twilight struggle" against communism, albeit a sideshow More fundamental issues such as corrupt governments, the necessity for economic reform and need for averting humanitarian crises

were viewed as secondary to the need to counter perceived Soviet expansionism. In addition, African leaders, fresh from the colonial experience, latched onto the anti-imperialistic ideology of communism and the economic prescriptions of socialism. The end of the Cold War has given the U.S. the enormous opportunity to further its interests in Africa, unhindered by a need to confront the Soviet Union. This opportunity manifests itself in several ways.

Africans have largely rejected socialist economic prescriptions and have moved away from centrally-planned economies. Africans are far more receptive to free market capitalism. The fall of communism, and the discrediting of socialist ideology, has opened the doors for desperately needed free-market reforms throughout the continent.

Further, the end of the Soviet presence in Africa has reduced the impediments to U.S. military intervention in Africa. Such intervention today is more likely to support humanitarian or evacuation operations. The absence of a Soviet threat has given U.S. planners a much freer hand in the conduct of such operations. For example, it is unlikely that the U.S. would have intervened in Somalia during the Cold War as it did in 1992.

Finally, with the absence of a perceived Soviet threat on the continent, the U.S. enjoys greater flexibility in its dealings with Africans. We are more able to act on moral principles and in support of humanitarian concerns than would have been possible during the Cold War. We are no longer obliged to provide support to corrupt regimes in the name of anti-communism. A Mobutu or Barre survived in the seventies and eighties because each could play their cards in the Cold War game. The U.S. is no longer constrained by strategic concerns from turning a blind eye to such kleptocratic despots.

Current U.S. Policy and Strategy

The U.S. Department of State, in its most recent statement of U.S. policy toward Sub-Saharan Africa, lists the following goals:

- Conflict resolution and peaceful change These are the primary American goals, since "success in achieving them is the basis for progress in all other areas "
- Democratic systems that respect human rights and seek equitable economic growth The report caveats this goal, stating that the U S "neither wishes to impose a particular system nor to enforce any legal code Rather it supports what Africans themselves increasingly demand, an effective voice in their own affairs and an end to corruption and abuse of power
- Sustained equitable development in Africa through market-based reforms The report notes that aid criteria should include good governance and structural reform goals, as well as respect for political and human rights
- U S assistance to Africa in combating the host of transnational problems faced by its people This includes not only AIDS and environmental degradation, but population growth, refugee flows and the status of women
- U S support for efforts to create smaller, more professional military forces clearly subordinate to civilian control and respectful of human rights ⁹

The Department of Defense notes that its priorities in Africa focus on "conflict prevention, management and resolution " DOD is actively involved in supporting African efforts to take the lead in resolving conflicts and in undertaking peacekeeping in the region ¹⁰ Foremost among these undertakings is the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) ACRI is a training initiative in which U S forces work cooperatively with African militaries to create highly effective and rapidly deployable peacekeeping units These units are envisioned as operating together in either a humanitarian or standard peacekeeping operations

The U S emphasis on democracy is often counterproductive. In part driven by the standard moral strain in American policy, this impulse in the African context is also driven by the view that political development will foster stability, particularly in concert with economic liberalization. Most analysts of Africa agree that political instability is the root cause of many of Africa's problems. However, it is a far stretch to offer democracy as the solution to political instability. In fact, democracy may foster instability itself. For example, the Sudanese experiment with open democracy in the 1980s and that of Algeria in the early 1990s, it can be argued, led directly to the multiplicity of problems facing those countries today. Liberal western-style democracy is simply insufficient as a template to be applied to all 49 Sub-Saharan states.

The United States has been slow to address the destabilizing role of African militaries. The African Crisis Response Initiative is one positive step. It puts the dirty work of policing the Continent's disaster areas in the laps of Africans themselves. In doing so, it provides an outlet for African militaries focused on domestic security and may have the additional consequence of inculcating them with a greater respect for civilian rule.

U S policy is remiss in its unspoken disavowal of the geopolitical importance of Africa, particularly its disregard for military access rights in African states. Of particular concern is the Horn, where access supports the U S military presence in the Persian Gulf. Such access, in Kenya, Djibouti, and perhaps Eritrea, might become even more important given the potential for domestic instability among U S allies in the Gulf. Further, access in the Horn also enables U S response to any threat to the critical Red Sea shipping lanes, particularly the strategic checkpoint of Bab el Mandeb. U S policy also ignores the geopolitical importance of South Africa. A sophisticated, well-armed adversary in South Africa could easily threaten shipping off of the Cape of Good Hope, in an area where the U S military would be hard pressed to respond.

Policy Recommendations

First, the U S should support “good governance” rather than call for the establishment of democratic systems. By good governance, the authors mean stable political systems, operating under the rule of law, that seek to advance the material and physical well-being of citizens while treating them with a significant degree of dignity and respect. “Good governance,” in the authors’ view, does not necessarily include western liberal democracy, with its emphasis on political pluralism and a broad notion of human rights. Our view of “good governance” draws a line, however, at systems that sanction corruption, abuse of power, and military intervention in government. The complexity and diversity make the imposition of liberal Western-style democracy problematic at a minimum, and destabilizing at its worst. The nurturing of leaders and movements committed to the principals of good governance will further political stability on the continent. Political stability, in turn, is the prerequisite for undertaking other policies aimed at protecting other U S interests.

The United States should continue to advocate “sustained equitable development through market based reforms that rely more on the private sector and promise to reduce dependence on external aid.” Further, the U S should reaffirm its commitment to work to ameliorate the effects of AIDS in particular and disease in general, as well as environmental degradation throughout the continent. It is America’s interest as well to continue its efforts to curb population growth, refugee flows and to work to improve the lot of African women. In particular, US aid should be targeted at the latter. History has shown that education for women leads to lower birth rates.

U S security interests would be advanced by a long-term strategy aimed at securing and maintaining access rights in the Horn. In no other region of Africa is a vital U S interest, in this case Persian Gulf oil, at issue. U S focus on Africa should be centered on encouraging stability in the Horn, and in cementing relationships with friendly regimes.

The United States should undertake initiatives aimed at promoting African solutions to African security issues. As one example, the African Crisis Response Initiative should be expanded. It supports the objective of creating smaller, but more professional African military forces that are subordinate to civilian authorities and respectful of human rights. More importantly, the ACRI places another tool in the toolbox of the international community when it is faced with another of the complex disasters that have ravaged the continent. Beyond ACRI, the Department of Defense should promote military-to-military contacts with the intent of fostering professionalism among African militaries as well as respect for civilian rule.

Conclusions

Over the next 15 years, the United States will be challenged in Africa by a wide range of mostly transnational threats to its many interests there. While those interests may be peripheral at best, any threat to them may put an American citizen, an American value, or even to a very limited degree, American prosperity in peril. The threats warrant an American response, albeit a limited one, and continuing U.S. engagement on the continent. The United States can play a significant positive role on the Continent in supporting good governance, professionalizing militaries, promoting equitable economic development and providing humanitarian assistance when human suffering is wide scale.

ENDNOTES

¹ Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, "U S Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa," August 1995

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ William J Clinton "A National Security for A New Century", Washington The White House, 1997, 5, U S national interest are enhancing security, economic prosperity and promoting democracy

⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook – 1995," CIA Office of Public and Agency Information, 1995

⁷ U S Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, Fact Sheet, "U S Trade and Investment in Sub-Saharan Africa (December 4, 1997) 1

⁸ Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, "U S Policy for a New Era in Sub-Saharan Africa," October, 2, 1996

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, "U S Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa," August 1995